Maintaining personal cleanliness was
very difficult indeed. Not only did the villagers have to contend with 515
the problem of carrying water but also with the lack of privacy in their crowded dwellings. One peasant said:

"We have no public bathhouse in our village, so only the wealthier people can take baths, because they are able to go to the nearby villages two or three times during the summer and make use of the mineral baths. In general, we do not bathe in fall, winter, or spring. If we bathe in the summer at home, we use a wooden tub and warm water. Sometimes when the weather is warm, men and women [of course, separately] bathe in the river. When the women are bathing there must be someone to guard against their being seen by others. Regularly at least once a week we wash our heads with soap and hot water, and also wash our faces and hands in the morning, but not necessarily with soap. No, we do not wash our hands before every meal, nor do we ever wash our teeth."

Throughout Bulgaria it was a common courtesy to say to a friend who had just emerged from a bath, *"Chestito banya"* or "Congratulations on your bath." However, if one dreamed of bathing, the villager [787]
would tell him that some trouble, perhaps death, was imminent.

I was surprised to find that some of the poorest homes had elec- 373 ●
tricity. The occupants explained:

"Oh, we find electricity cheaper than petroleum lamps provided we use small electric bulbs. Those who do not have electricity in their homes know of this advantage but have never saved up enough money to put in the wires."

And there they sat on a winter's night: the older women doing 512
fine, closely stitched embroidery, the girls knitting, and the man per- 373
haps reading a newspaper. The only illumination in the whole room, except for the flicker of the fire in the sheet metal stove, was a fly-specked twenty-watt bulb swinging from the ceiling.

The two or three large kettles hanging over or resting on the 415
floor beside the stove, the knife and fork rack on the wall, and the 262
few pottery dishes stacked on the kneading trough called my attention to the peasant's food habits. This was the way the people described their diet: